Associate Of Hoffa Testifies He Paid Bills For A Judge

By Max Sonderby

An associate of imprisoned James R. Hoffa told in U.S. District Court on Monday of paying hotel bills, dinner tabs and transportation costs for a New Orleans judge.

The witness, Zachary A. Strate Jr., also described a cocktail lounge tete-a-tete with Walter Sheridan, former special consultant to Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.).

Attorneys for Hoffa, teamsters union president, charged that Kennedy, as attorney general, directed an all-out crusade to put their client in prison.

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June 17 Talk

Hoffa, Strate and four associates now are appealing 1964 fraud convictions on the ground that illegal electronics eavesdropping evidence was used against them.

Strate told of a talk he had with New Orleans Criminal Court Judge Malcolm O'Hara in the bar of the Bourbon-Orleans Motel last June 17. He described the judge as "a very close friend of mine for 16 years."

At the meeting, the witness said, was Edward Baldwin, political foe of controversial New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison, author of charges of a conspiracy led to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

At the time, the testimony before Judge Richard B. Austin showed, Strate was attempting to trade information against Garrison for evidence of wiretapping by Kennedy's agents in the Hoffa case.

'In The Same Room'

Donald Page Moore, special government attorney, on cross-examination, went into the matter of expenses paid for the judge by Strate on a trip to Washington four months ago.

"I probably did pay his fare and hotel bill," the witness said. "We were in the same room."

Q. Did O'Hara know you were a convicted felon?

A. Yes, and I think he was

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... of modeling jobs. Her skinny body and sensuous face landed in about every American fashion magazine on her first trip here earlier this year.

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proud to be with me. He acted like it.

Moore then brought out that Strate, a New Orleans building contractor, paid the judge's expenses on perhaps 10 trips, including one to Las Vegas.

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Strate also testified that Judge O'Hara asked Edward Grady Partin, New Orleans teamster local official, to sign an affidavit on Hoffa's behalf in a Tennessee case.

The affidavit, which Partin refused to sign, charged the government with using wiretap evidence against Hoffa in Tennessee.

Hunt For Evidence

Strate quoted Judge O'Hara as having said that Sheridan, as an investigative reporter for the National Broadcasting Co., was looking for evidence to discredit Garrison in the President Kennedy matter.

Q. Did Sheridan say to you, "Before you go any further, what do you want from me?"

A. He may have.

Q. Did you say, "Get Hoffa out of jail—you guys won the war (by convicting Hoffa) so help us."

A. I would have said that. It was in my mind.

Q. When he asked how, did you say, "By giving us evidence of wiretapping?"

The question went unanswered, but Strate later testified:

"The impression he (Sheridan) made on me was that he was willing to help me in Chicago if I would help him in New Orleans."

A.